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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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Resolution adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY AND THE EXPRESSION OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY AS A MEANS OF ENSURING THE STABILITY OF ALL STATES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BETTER USE OF THE PEACE DIVIDEND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE THIRD WORLD

Resolution adopted by the 87th Inter-Parliamentary Conference
(Yaoundé, 6-11 April 1992)

The 87th Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Recalling the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

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Recognizing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which constitutes the first legally binding international United Nations treaty in the field of human rights,

Recalling the declarations and resolutions of other international and multilateral bodies reaffirming respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming that all Governments have an obligation to promote and protect the human rights of all, without distinction as to race, caste, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or place of birth,

Recognizing that pluralistic democracy may exist in a variety of forms, is not confined to one particular model, and requires that those governed should participate in government,

Conscious that universal principles and elements of democracy should be followed by all and that it is up to every State to develop its own system in which these basic principles are implemented, in keeping with the nation's sociocultural traditions, values and ideals for the future,

Taking into account that democracy constitutes a prerequisite for sustainable development which allows people to develop their creative energies and contribute to building and furthering their society,

Recognizing that democracy and development are inseparably interrelated,

Bearing in mind the indivisibility and interlinkages of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Referring to such basic principles as respect for human rights, rule of law, separation of powers, national sovereignty, pluralism, elections and religious freedom,

Conscious of basic habeas corpus guarantees such as the right to life, legal security and the independence of the justice system, protection against arbitrary arrest and the right to a fair trial,

Reaffirming that the effective functioning of democracy requires competence, accountability and respect for the individual on the part of those in Government, that it is the right of all people to participate freely in the Government of their country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives, and that the basis of the authority of democratic Government is the will of the people,

Reaffirming also that civil and political rights can best be observed in an environment of economic and social justice,

Expressing deep concern that throughout the world serious problems are arising from interethnic and intergroup conflicts involving, in particular, persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities,

Recalling article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, according to which "in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language",

Considering that the fundamental principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of States is not incompatible with the duty of the international community towards human rights treaties and the duty of rendering assistance to oppressed national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities,

Also considering that the promotion and protection of the rights of these persons contributes to the political, economic and social stability of the States in which they live and to the strengthening of cooperation and friendship among peoples and States,

Recognizing the importance to the stability and economic development of multi-ethnic States of peaceful coexistence among the various communities and mutual respect for their traditions, languages, religions and practices,

Convinced that only the establishment of democratic systems can bring nations closer together in respect for law and fundamental freedoms, and urging the non-use of force and violence in the settlement of conflicts, be it between or within States, the respect of the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities and the loyalty of such minorities to the State, which contributes to national stability and integrity,

Recalling that for democracy to be maintained in developing countries, it should go hand in hand with sustainable economic and social development so that hunger, illiteracy and abject poverty do not deprive the people of their most basic rights,

Considering the potential dimension of the peace dividend to be reaped by the ending of the cold war, and the fact that a small percentage of those savings, if passed on, could avert much conflict and unrest in developing countries,

A

WITH REGARD TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND MECHANISMS

1. Calls on all States to take measures to ensure that their political structures are based on the full participation of all citizens, regardless of racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious background, as well as on the

principles of individual freedom and basic human rights for all, in order to promote dynamic and harmonious interethnic relations;

2. Condemns all acts of racism, xenophobia and discrimination on grounds of nationality, race, sex or religion, and calls on all Governments to establish effective laws in this regard;

3. Underlines the fundamental role of women in productive processes and the need to enhance their involvement in the decision-making process and eradicate inequalities between men and women;

4. Reminds Governments of the importance of access to the media for the full expression of ethnic, religious or linguistic identity, and calls on them to ensure such access wherever necessary;

5. Emphasizes that the establishment of political freedom, participation by all, respect for human rights and the rule of law are essential for long-term stability and sustainable economic development;

B

WITH REGARD TO NATIONAL MINORITIES AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

6. Acknowledges that a universally accepted definition of minorities does not exist, and recommends the improvement of standards concerning civil and political rights and the protection of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities;

7. Urges all Governments to ensure that national policies and programmes are planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities;

8. Calls on all nations to settle disputes and conflicts, particularly those affecting national minorities, by peaceful and non-violent means and in a spirit of mutual respect, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law;

9. Calls on all States to protect within their respective territories the existence and the national, ethnic, religious or linguistic identity of minorities and to create conditions for the promotion of that identity;

10. Calls on Governments and parliamentary assemblies to take steps to protect and promote peaceful coexistence and constructive interaction between the various communities of multi-ethnic societies;

11. Recommends that parliamentarians world wide welcome information and suggestions provided by non-governmental human rights organizations regarding persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities;

C

WITH REGARD TO INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

12. Calls on all States that have not yet done so to accede to and/or ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and all other international human rights treaties;

13. Calls for the full implementation of the principles of these treaties;

14. Proposes that the set of instruments available to the United Nations for peace-keeping purposes be expanded and strengthened;

15. Calls for the further development of international mechanisms, such as the establishment of a United Nations Court of Human Rights and a High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a view to strengthening and steadily improving human rights treaties;

D

WITH REGARD TO THE PEACE DIVIDEND

16. Calls for new approaches to peaceful and constructive international cooperation in a period of growing confidence;

17. Calls on the developed countries to reduce spending on arms and redirect resources towards investment in economic development, ensuring that the benefits are distributed fairly among the developing countries;

18. Calls on developing countries to freeze military spending and increase social spending on priority areas of human development.